

CHAPTER 2.0

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The proposed DMP Update includes components that would occur within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City in the northern portion of San Diego County, California (see Figure 1-1). The following provides a general description of the environmental setting of the proposed DMP Update area. Sections 4.1 through 4.12 provide a detailed description of the environmental setting as it relates to each environmental issue area analyzed in this EIR.

Carlsbad is a coastal jurisdiction encompassing approximately 42 square miles and is generally bordered on the north by the cities of Oceanside and Vista, on the east by Vista and San Marcos, and on the south by Encinitas. Like most of the southern California region, Carlsbad has a generally mild climate, with temperatures averaging 58 degrees in January and 73 degrees in July and an average rainfall of approximately 10 inches.

Approximately 67 percent of the city is developed with a variety of land uses (San Diego Association of Governments [SANDAG] 2005). Of the developed areas, 31 percent consists of residential uses, 18 percent is commercial and/or industrial uses, and 13 percent is composed of agricultural uses (SANDAG 2005). The remaining area consists of open space, public uses, utility rights-of-way, and other uses. The majority of existing commercial development within Carlsbad is located along El Camino Real, immediately south of State Route 78 (SR 78), and south of Cannon Road along Interstate 5 (I-5). In addition, existing commercial uses dominate the city's downtown area, along with numerous hotels and service stations along the I-5 corridor. Industrial land uses are primarily concentrated within the city's centralized industrial corridor that surrounds McClellan-Palomar Airport and generally extends to the eastern and western city limits. Civic land uses, such as schools, parks, city buildings and storage yards, are dispersed throughout Carlsbad. The majority of open space is located within and adjacent to the three major lagoons (shown in Figure 1-2) located within Carlsbad: Buena Vista, Agua Hedionda, and Batiquitos, as well as their associated tributaries. Other major open space areas in Carlsbad include Lake Calavera, Veteran's Memorial Park site, Dawon-Los Monos Preserve, and Box Canyon.

Carlsbad is characterized by diverse topography, consisting of coastal bluffs adjacent to the Pacific Ocean and inland valley, hill, and ridge formations, ranging in elevation from sea level to 1,000 feet above mean sea level. Along the coast, there are low sandy beaches and high coastal

bluffs. From the coast to I-5, the land is relatively level, with the broad floodplains of the three lagoons within city boundaries (Buena Vista, Agua Hedionda, and Batiquitos) extending from the coast through the steeper sloping hills east of I-5.

Carlsbad has a rich cultural history, including prehistoric occupation by Native Americans and early settlement by the Spanish during the missionary period and Americans in the nineteenth century. The coastal areas and lagoons contain numerous sites for historical archaeology, and many historical structures from the city's growth remain intact, largely west of I-5.

Major roadways in the city include I-5, which runs north to south along the coastal corridor, and SR 78, which provides interregional access through or around the city. Transportation corridors within Carlsbad are generally meandering, constrained by natural topographic conditions (e.g., steep hills, lagoons). I-5 and SR 78, as well as several of the city's existing major arterials, carry through traffic as well as local traffic. The city contains four primary arterial roadways (Figure 1-2), including El Camino Real, which runs north and south through the center of Carlsbad; Palomar Airport Road, which runs east and west through the center of the city; Rancho Santa Fe Road, which runs along the southern and easterly boundary of Carlsbad, and Melrose Avenue, which runs north and south along the city's eastern border.

The areas of the city bordering the coast are located within the California Coastal Zone. To comply with the requirement of the California Coastal Act, the City adopted a Local Coastal Program (LCP) in 1996, which encompasses approximately 9,700 acres of the city (39 percent) within the Coastal Zone (City of Carlsbad 1996). In many areas, El Camino Real delineates the eastern boundary of the Coastal Zone.

While coastal portions of the city are largely developed, natural vegetation communities remain in and around the three coastal lagoons and on some of the higher, steep-sloped, inland portions of Carlsbad. Natural vegetation communities cover approximately 8,758 acres (36 percent of the city's total area) (City of Carlsbad 2004). Oceanside and Vista are largely built-out, such that in many places the natural communities along the Carlsbad border are adjacent to developed areas. The remaining landscape linkages to natural communities outside the city occur along the southeastern border with San Marcos and the unincorporated lands and along the southern border with Encinitas. Coastal sage scrub in Carlsbad also is part of a regionally significant stepping stone corridor that extends into Oceanside, connecting coastal California gnatcatcher (a federally threatened species and California Species of Special Concern) populations in Orange and Riverside counties with those south and east of Carlsbad.

The City is a participant in the San Diego County Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) and has prepared an MHCP subarea plan called the *Habitat Management Plan for Natural Communities in the City of Carlsbad* (HMP; City of Carlsbad 2004). The HMP is a long-range plan for conserving sensitive habitat while still allowing additional development to occur in the city. The HMP establishes a habitat preserve system consisting of approximately 5,750 acres of existing and proposed open space (City of Carlsbad 2004). The HMP is intended to direct citywide permits and authorization for the incidental take of sensitive species in conjunction with private development, public projects, and other activities that are consistent with the HMP.

Carlsbad is located within the Carlsbad Hydrologic Unit (CHU), which is approximately 210 square miles and extends from Lake Wohlford on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west and from Vista on the north to Cardiff-by-the-Sea to the south. The CHU includes the cities of Oceanside, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Vista, and Escondido, as well as areas of unincorporated San Diego County, and four coastal lagoons: Buena Vista, Agua Hedionda, Batiquitos, and San Elijo. Carlsbad encompasses four local watersheds contained within the CHU: Buena Vista Creek, Agua Hedionda Creek, Encinas Creek, and Batiquitos Lagoon. The four major drainage basins (Basins A, B, C, and D) defined within the DMP Update and illustrated in Figure 1-2 roughly correspond to these four local watersheds, respectively.

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